A REPORT ON CONTEMPORARY CZECH YOUTH POLICY IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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A. INTRODUCTION

1. Basic Introduction

1.1. Definition of the youth category

The category of the youth can be defined according to a number of criteria; age being probably the most widely used one by the majority of authors. Nevertheless, other defining characteristics might be equally important, for example socio-economic status, ethnical background, gender or the level of physical development (i.e., puberty, sexual maturity). In this report, we define the youth primarily as an age category corresponding predominantly to the notion of adolescence, i.e. people of approximately 14–24 years of age. The *Conception of the National Youth Policy* (Conception 2002), a basic document of the Czech governmental youth policy, considers all citizens up to 26 years of age to be children and the youth; this is in accordance with the Czech legal specifications and reputedly with the official view of UNESCO (see section B3.1.) that makes additional distinction between children (till 18 years of age) and the youth (till 26 years of age). The cohort definition will be used as well to present basic representative demographical data.

The acquisition of identification card at the age of 15 is the first official symbol of adult identity. The official legal age of 18 endows every young person to act fully on his/her account and to assume all the responsibilities connected with adult age. According to the Czech law, the legal age implies right to get married, obtain a driver's license, purchase tobacco products and alcoholic beverages, and to have the right to vote, etc. Nevertheless, the real social maturity usually comes much later - at about 26 years of age (a completion of university studies).

1.2. Demographical background

In 2001, this somewhat broadly defined group of children and youth comprised of some 3,3 million Czech citizens, out of which about 1,5 million of young people between 15 and 24 years of age, and thus falling under two respective age cohorts of 15–19 and 20–24 years. As might be seen from the following table, these two age cohorts represented approximately 15 % of the Czech population throughout the recent history (Historical Yearbook, Czech Statistical Office 2003):

	1950	1961	1970	1980	1990	2003
Youth 15-24	15,6	14,2	17,7	14,5	15,1	14,3

Share of Youth in Czech Population (%)
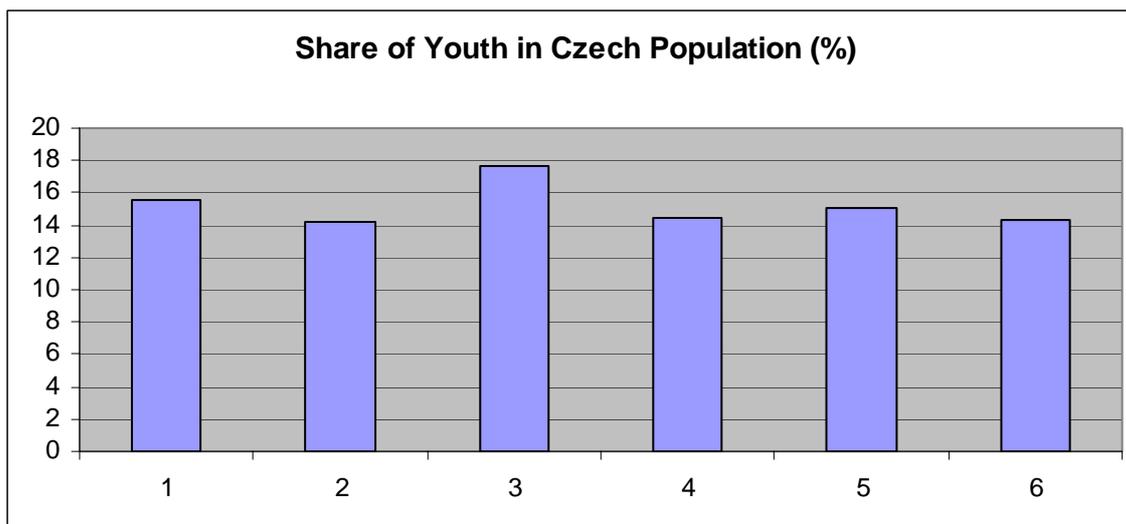
From the same table, three major observations may be made. The sixties had been characterized by an important decrease in natality leading towards lower percentage representation of the youth in the eighties. At the beginning of the seventies, this trend was counter parted with massive social policy measures, such as financial and housing support to young families and extension of maternity leave in order to increase the low birth rates. The timing of these steps taken by communist government was associated with the entrance of the baby-boomers into the parenthood phase; these two factors accounted for a numerically strong generation of the so-called Husák's children (Husák being the last communist president of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic).

Due to socio-economic changes and subsequent changes in the lifestyle after the "Velvet Revolution" in 1989, the trend began to change. After the decades of relatively high fertility rates, rapidly decreasing number of young people in the population, as a whole, starts to be the reality. According to the demographical research (Aleš, Šimek 1996), the youth population will shrink to a group of less than one million; ergo about one half of its today's size.

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
15-19	852	682	644	573	479	446
20-24	863	854	685	647	576	483
Total	1715	1536	1329	1220	1055	929

Forcasted Decline of Youth Population
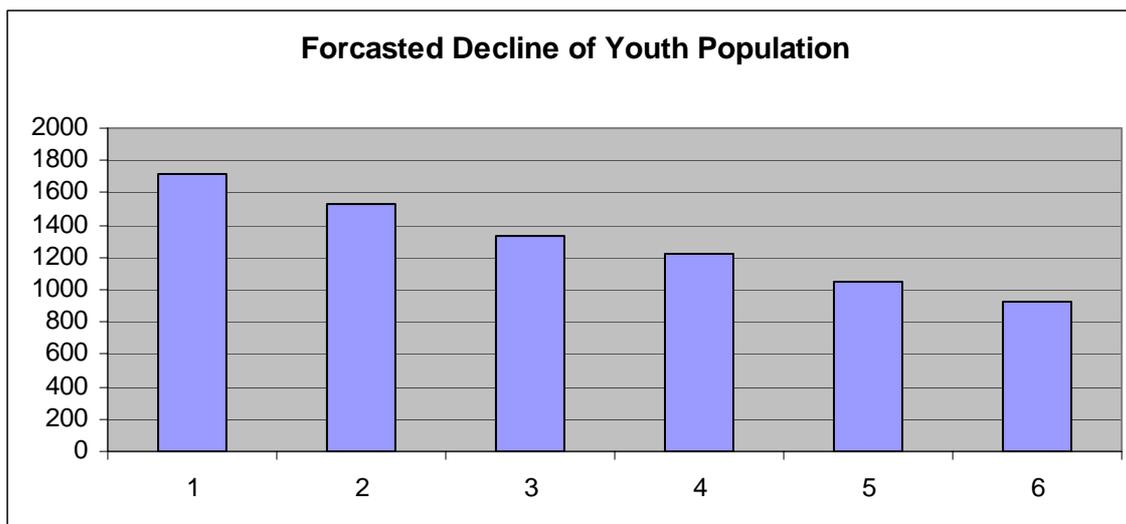
The reduction of the share of young people in the population is a general trend in the entire Europe.

1.3. Socio-economic background of the Czech youth

Looking at the socio-economic status of the young people, two basic legal schemes might be traced (Czech Statistical Office 2005):

Youth Schemes

- Student
- Employed
- Parent. Leave
- Retired
- Unemployed
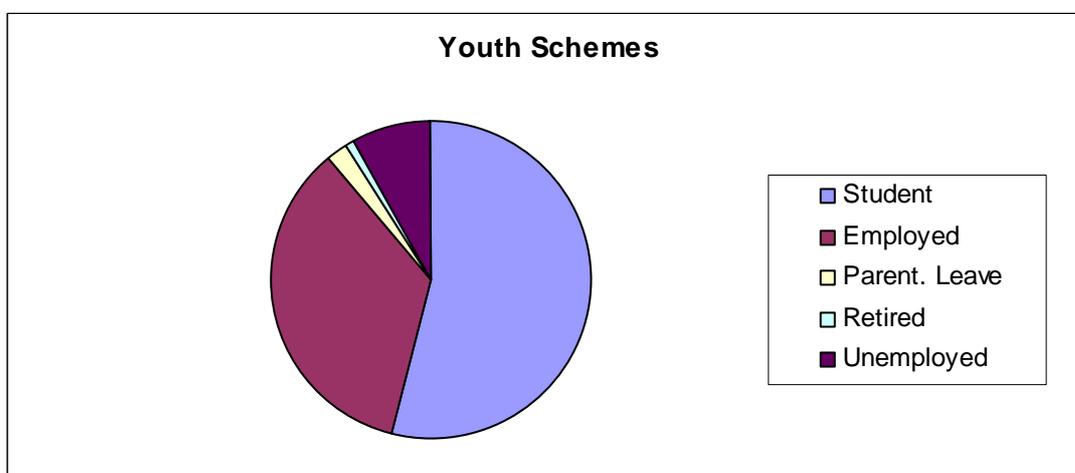
First, about 54 % of young people are classified as students, taking some, if not all, legal advantages (i.e., social security, tax allowances, financial aids, preferential tariffs) and disadvantages (temporary lower labor remuneration, not being entitled to unemployment welfare, etc.). The share of the students is relatively high in all the age cohorts in the Czech Republic including youth. Nevertheless, the segment of young people leaving the educational system earlier than the majority are frequently exposed to long-term unemployment, temporary jobs and their initial unemployment rates are about two times higher than in the rest of Europe. Even bigger discrepancy may be observed if these numbers are compared with the unemployment rates of the population with tertiary education.

Second most widely represented group among young people is the group of young people who are already employed. This group stands for some 35 % of the total. The unemployed

represent approximately 8 % of the total; a relatively important figure with regard to the fact that only 43 % of young people belong to the economically active part of the population. Among other minor socio-economic schemes, we may cite parental leave or early retirement due to health problems or invalidity.

As mentioned above, socio-economic status may be considered as one of the characteristics that are decisive for the delimitation of the adolescence and marking of the transition between adolescence and adult age. In the Czech Republic, several factors contribute to blur this transition, some similar to those known in the Western Europe as well, other rather specific for the post-totalitarian experience. For both categories, we may mention higher geographical mobility of the population, newly introduced plurality of values and opinions, as well as necessity of long-term and highly specialized professional training, weakening of family relations accompanied with enhancement of the school-environment relations with coevals, or more extensive youth-protection legislation.

2. Youth Perception and Major Trends

2.1 Youth perception – the channels of the debate

The most intellectually challenging theme of the contemporary Czech society is the evaluation of the post-communist development. In the assessment of the main trends and the today's state of Czech society, one may always trace a strong presence of political. One enduring political aspect of the situation is the degree of criticism of the former communist regime.

In these debates, the youth is often examined from two major angles; (a) schooling and education, on one hand and (b) mental attitudes and abilities on the other hand; both of these problems are only of peripheral importance to this study. Most of the expert debates takes place in either the common sociological journals and newspapers or in educational and pedagogical disciplines. Unlike in Slovakia, in the Czech Republic, there is no professional journal devoted solely to the youth.

As far as the popular media are concerned, the most popular semi-tabloid *Mladá fronta Dnes* that used to be a major press of the Socialist Youth Association (on SSM, see section D2), now has nearly no significance with respect to the youth. The issues of the youth attract the widest attention only in educational matters (i.e., structure of schooling system, tution fees at the universities) and in the arena of social and cultural problems (i.e., Roma community, drug abuse).

Nevertheless, there are two recent points in the public debate that are dealing with youth; (a) criminal liability line; and (b) "privatization" of the former communist youth organizations' property. To outline the nature of the debate, we will draw few notes on one of the debates further in the section "Criminal liability line".

2.2 Major trend in youth development – a shift towards active participation

If there is one major societal trend to be mentioned to describe the post-1989 youth sector heading, it would definitely be the trend towards active participation. The end of the communist rule, the loss of official and unofficial necessities of the public life produced a strong shift towards subcultures and other forms of anti-establishment groups. In the mid-nineties, highly diverse but partly consolidated efforts to work with young people began to be recognized.

As one illustration of this trend is the new emphasis on the teachers' self-education, the role of ethics in the educational process, active approach to the subject matter, thorough

preparation for the classes, and individual approach is generally more and more required from teachers at all types of educational institutions. The values of personal experience together with insights and empathy are starting to be acknowledged. This is reflected on all levels of the educational system.

The role of ethics in education is stressed not only with respect to the teachers but also as a need to equip students with some basic tools to help them to solve possible future ethical dilemmas and as a basis on which to build one's own personal integrity and responsibility. Education towards tolerance, solidarity, and against all types of xenophobia, as well as the environmental and civic participation issues are absolutely crucial in the context of the Czech Republic since these topics were taught under the communism.

The themes presented above may well be comprehended as one of the substantial constituents of the educational paradigm governing the newest development of the educational processes during the nineties and the beginning of this century. Now, we present yet another trend – volunteering – that has penetrated extensively into the public awareness.

2.3 The volunteering phenomenon

We may divide the vision pertaining to the contemporary Czech youth into two major streams: the pessimistic and optimistic ones. The pessimistic vision sees the Czech youth as preferring mainly the consumption model based on the deprivation of free time activities and towards the trend of de-idealizing the world. There are sings of so-called pessimistic nostalgia (Němeček 2004). The more optimistic view of the Czech youth tends to emphasize their spirit of volunteering and willingness to contribute to the larger society.

This is not a new phenomenon because the communist regime before 1989 was ideologically devoted to volunteering of any kind to demonstrate that the people's behavior was not guided by the "villain" bourgeois system of profit. However, the reality of volunteering was different; the unpaid work (i.e., volunteering) required by the government on the basis of socialist moral grounds was not free from its coercive character. For instance, the public cleaning activities, such as litter tidying at the public places, was a part of the so-called "Akce Z" that was a matter of coercion and was considered to be a demonstration of conformity. Or the voluntary self-help construction of apartment buildings served to replace government deficiencies in providing accommodation for its citizens.

According to the current survey (Frič 2001), the rate of professional volunteering activities is relatively low in comparison to Western Europe and the United States, but a closer look to other Central and Eastern European countries actually suggests a positive increase in the Czech Republic:
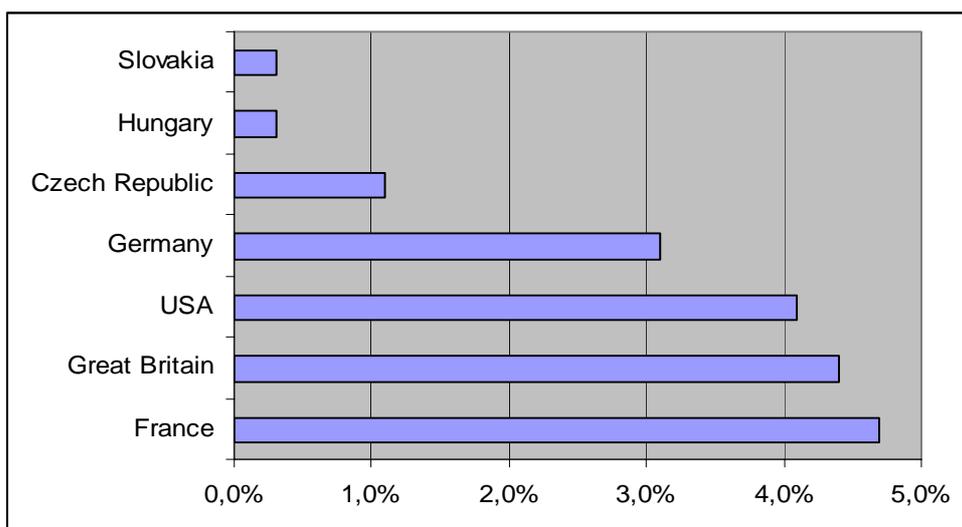
In addition, the public opinion has a strong trust in the NGO sector providing public services. On the other hand, it is striking how ambiguous the common conception of the role of the NGOs and of the state may be. If you consider the 70% conviction that the NGO services and activities are only a product of paralyzed state, it becomes clear that the state is still believed to be the "indigenous" source of solution.

In comparison to the status and structure of volunteering in liberal Western democracies, today's volunteering phenomenon in the Czech Republic has some special features. The corporate volunteering and the tradition of casual community services do not exist and the volunteering is frequently a matter of the youth. It usually serves as an episodic part of one's early adolescence lasting rarely more than two years. In addition, the approach of the relevant organizations to the volunteering is not systematic and there are no real social examples for the youth in this domain.

However, the contemporary situation was influenced by one prominent factor during the nineties. The required military service was so unpopular among young men that the civilian service, in spite of its length (1.5-times longer than the usual military service), was a sought-after escape possibility. The types of the civilian military service were diverse but the prevailing activities were social and/or medical services. Public acceptance of this "problem" probably had strong implications on the perception of voluntary or semi-voluntary public services even now after the general compulsory military service was cancelled.

2.4 Types of volunteer organizations

From the organizational point of view, there are three types of organizations. First type is an organization with volunteers as an inessential supplement. For instance, "Život 90", (Life 90) is an organization providing services and daily centers for senior citizens and uses volunteers either to help out with activities for the leisure time or to expand the capacity of the daily informational centers. The volunteers are thus providing additional services to the core activities provided by the full-time employees. Second type is an organization where daily activities are carried out by professionals in tandem with volunteers. Sue Ryder's chain of retirement houses may serve here as an example.

Third type are the volunteer-based organizations as "People in Need Foundation" or Adra. These organizations consist of a small number of paid employees and a high number of the volunteers whose work is now becoming the standard. Such transformation of the original

"club of the willing" to a professional complex humanitarian organization has been accompanied by the systematization of the volunteer praxis including the development of entrance tests for specific positions. The above-mentioned types of organizations contrast with the inability of the government to administer effectively the humanitarian aid.

One of the outcomes, besides the shift from administration of the humanitarian aid of the government to the non-governmental organizations, as an attempt to establish a dialogue between the state and various major volunteer-based organizations of the third type in particular. This process started in 2001; this year was pronounced by the government - under the patronage of the Minister of Social Affairs Vladimír Špidla, present-day EU Commissioner for labor and social affair - to be the "International Year of the Volunteering in the Czech Republic".

Following 2001, one main goal was achieved with success. The dialogue resulted in a legal act institutionalizing the volunteer work. Now there are two major volunteering associations having databases of volunteers: Hestia – National Volunteering Center and INEX – Youth Voluntary Work Association.

It also has to be mentioned that even though it is not common to classify the leisure-time volunteer activities as the volunteering organizations, it is the most frequent case (for more, see the leisure section).

3. Endangered Groups of the Youth

3.1. Specification of the endangered groups

Young people, especially adolescents, are often threatened by various problems ranging from moderate and temporary psychical disorders to serious social exclusion and criminality. In one of its surveys, IDM identifies five major groups of young people deserving special attention of the social and educational institutions, specifically:
-    talented young people;
-    Roma people and young people belonging to other ethnical or national minorities;
-    young people with disabilities;
-    socially handicapped youth;
-    the unemployed.

The following table shows the percentages of institutions actually working with these groups (IDM 2002). It may very well serve to introduce some of the tensions and trends in the field of youth development:

Minorities	51%	12%	6%
Handicapped	41%	6%	22%
Socially disadvantaged	33%	28%	35%
Unemployed	16%	51%	24%
Talented	63%	3%	13%

3.2 Youth unemployment and basic characteristics of the employment policy

As might be concluded from the above, unemployment is probably the most serious social problem linked with the youth in the Czech Republic (Czech Statistical Office 2002):

Specific Unemployment Rates
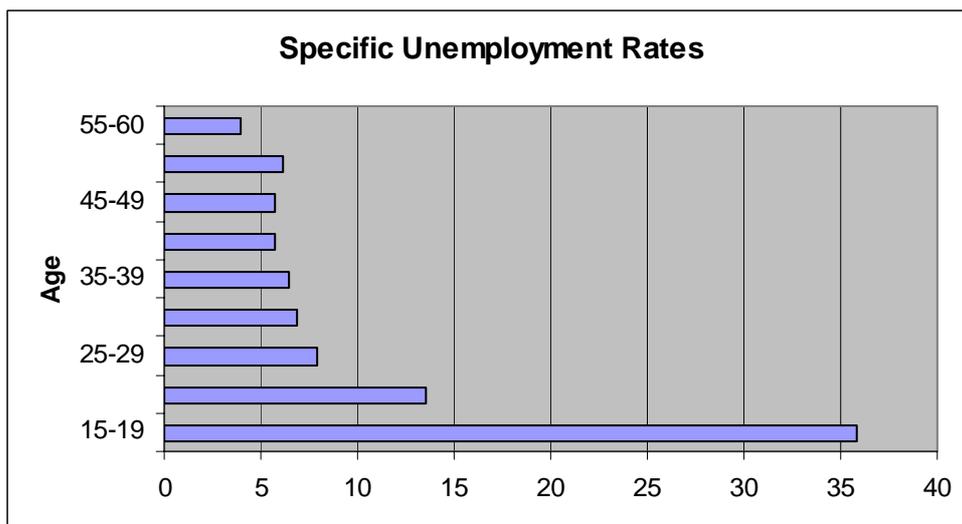
If we admit, that democracy should be based on the principle of social equality, the manifested patterns of the youth exclusion and youth-linked disadvantages start to be alarming. Failure in finding employment for the youth at the very beginning of their professional career may result in loss of motivation and can have further consequences in higher tendency towards socially pathological behavior.

Because of the importance of the parameters set by the governmental employment policy, we feel bound to present at least some consequential features of the new Employment Act adopted in October 2004 (www.mpsv.cz). First, the conception of the category of "freshly graduated" has changed. Before, this category had comprised of young people with less than two years after successful graduation. Henceforward, the risk group demanding care in employment procurement covers young people until 25 years and university graduates with less than two years after successful graduation that could be up to 30 years of age. This category represents about one quarter of the unemployed. Almost 10 % of the unemployed youth actually never worked.

Another change goes for the acknowledgement of social subsidies to the unemployed graduates. The subsidy can be henceforward adjudged only to applicants having in preceding three years a job or performing other earning activity for at least 12 months. In addition to the services provided to all the applicants, like employment intermediation, professional consultancy or re-qualification, the employment of the youth should be supplemented by higher motivation of employers to hire the young unemployed through the partial or even full financial subsidies on wage or job creation.

3.3. Roma minority

Roma minority in the Czech Republic is afflicted by almost all the social problems that we can imagine – high rates of long-term unemployment, low educational level, poor housing, bad hygienic and health conditions, wide-range of drug abuse, gambling, etc. As we can see now, the social costs of the socio-economic transformation were much higher for the Roma minority than for the rest of the society.

The institutional change after 1989 brought about the much needed insights into the research, documentation, and practice concerning the social work with Roma minority. From the purely academic point of view, literally hundreds of dissertations and thesis were written during the nineties solely on the topic of Roma youth, their education or social and family

issues, as well as on the topic Roma culture and history. Despite this interest, social exclusion of the Roma seems to be prevalent.

Not having enough space for an in-depth description of all the mechanisms, concepts and actors involved in the social work with the Roma minority people, we shall present only a short view of the issue. Further discussion and extensive academic coverage (i.e., Navrátil 2002, Navrátil 2003) are available to the public interested. In spite of the quantity of the coverage, the main limiting factor for both the research and the subsequent policy measures is the methodological/ethical problem of Roma identification. Since all the methods except for the self identification are unacceptable due to their putative offensiveness and the members of Roma community do not identify themselves as Roma, it is virtually impossible to acquire any reliable data.

As the youth policy regarding Roma minority is almost inexistent on the national level (except for the institution of the so-called educational assistants), we have to look at the local initiatives carried out by the local authorities, specialized NGOs, and other interested actors. As a case study of a Roma youth policy conception, we will describe the situation in Brno, the second-largest city in the Czech Republic with a large Roma minority.

Since 1989, many local actors including the academic environment have been active in formulating and carrying out the steps towards assimilation of Roma into the Czech society. Thorough theoretical documents have been published, including extensive SWOT analyses of the situation and two-gear policy targeting groups of Roma people with different socio-economic and historical background. Differentiated measures have been proposed at different levels of social live as well as the consciously focused solutions pertaining to the community housing, or better educational structure.

As an example of a well-functioning organization, we present the activities of "DROM" – cultural and educational center for Roma children and youth in Brno. It was created under the patronage of local authorities in order to offer a wide variety of activities for all age categories of Roma youth, but mainly out-of-school educational activities, leisure activities, consultancy, social work, and cultural events. The activities are pursued by 10 employees, streetworkers, and lectors. In cooperation with the local employment office, about 25 Roma external employees help with the functioning of the center.

Low-threshold-high-radius strategies together with 3 million CZK subsidies per year provide for 500 young people. The club-room operates on daily basis and is regularly attended by several dozens of local Roma children. About 300 young people participate in leisure activities, such as cimbalom band, modern dance, soccer club, karate etc. The range of the activities and their preventive functions are even more enhanced by the cooperation of the center with local elementary schools. In addition, the center reflects the needs of the modern society by offering computer courses, employment and housing consultancy, running an anti-drug peer program, as well as organizing international exchanges. Last but not least, we should mention the Roma policemen recruitment program, which seems to be one of the major steps towards full integration of the Roma into the Czech community.

3.4. Youth and drugs

The Ministry of Health has promised to monitor very closely the usage of drugs among young people in order to enhance the health condition and the overall well-being of the Czech population. It organizes a regular survey of the situation via the Czech Sanitary Service based on extensive local inquiry and anonymous questionnaires. This survey gets filled-up by more than 13,000 elementary-school and high-school students aged between 14 and 19 years (Polanecký 2001). It claims to be compatible with the so-called ESPAD standards and thus

provides the basis for international comparisons. Two categories of intoxicants are to be distinguished in the health context: legal intoxicant (mainly alcohol and tobacco) and non-legal intoxicant (mainly cannabis and its derivatives, stimulants, sedatives, ecstasy, LSD, and toluene).

According to the data presented by the Ministry of Health, approximately one half of all the respondents claim never having tried a non-legal drug. The difference in the rates of abstinence for boys and girls is not significant; a feature characteristic for the drug use in developed countries with high rates of drug consumption among young people. However, the preferences of drug usage are specific for the two sexes; girls manifest higher preferences for the use of sedatives.

Sixty percents of those who declared having already personal experience with drugs used harder drugs. The percentage of students declaring regular use (i.e., more than 6 times in life) of marihuana is 22 %. Regular use of harder drugs comes up to 2–4 % of all respondents. Analyzing this situation from the point of view based on the users' age, one year of the age difference between 14 and 17 means approximately ten percents of difference in the number of users. During the entire period of the nineties, the first experience with drugs was at earlier age. This information shows the importance of focusing on the prevention especially among the younger children.

The modal age of first use can be seen in the following table:

Marihuana a hashish	14		LSD and hallucinogens	16
Volatile substances	14		Steroids	16
Sedatives	15		Heroin	15–17
Ecstasy, pervitin, crack	16		Cocaine	16–17

The youngest groups of children (10–14) are threatened mainly by the use of marihuana and sniffing of volatile substances like toluene. As follows from the survey, young people are relatively familiar with the risks associated with the drug use but still the drug abuse, mainly legal drugs, marihuana, popular ecstasy or hallucinogens, seems to be a well-established social norm among youth population.

As for the legal drugs, we have to conclude that the percentages of underage drinkers and smokers are very high in the Czech Republic especially in comparison with the averages of the EU and other developed countries. Only about 23 % of young people are avowed non-smokers, 21 % of them being regular smokers, including 8 % of very heavy smokers smoking more than 10 cigarettes a day. More than 75 % of young people are drinking regularly, with almost 10 % of young people binge drinking at least once per week. The typical age of smoking or drinking neophyte is 14 or 15.

3.5. Juvenile criminality

Three basic observations can be made in regard to the juvenile criminality in the Czech Republic. Probably the most important fact is the relatively steady and significant decrease of the number of offences committed by Czech juveniles during the last decade. The official figures suggest that the reduction of the juvenile criminality amounts to more than one third of the offences. Still, a closer examination of the reduction-drivers would be needed for an unimpugnable analysis of the situation.

Secondly, the structure of the juvenile offences shows relatively stable characteristics. For example theft (including burglary, embezzlement, fraud and similar offences) is the most frequent offence committed by Czech youth. Other typical, although not so frequent, category

of juvenile criminality is traffic offences. However, the number of thefts or traffic offences tends to decrease even more rapidly than the number of total offences. In spite of the general decrease in the number of offences, certain types of juvenile criminality stay consequential, such as unlicensed manufacture and holding of drugs and poisons, battery, or sexual crimes (like rape, sexual abuse or prostitution) being just a few examples. These facts are documented in the following table (Czech Statistical Office):

	1995	1999	2000	2001	2002
Theft	3403	2149	1958	1778	1641
Battery	184	218	239	211	232
Drugs	24	187	143	132	165
Rape / sex. abuse	108	120	80	84	109
Traffic offenses	203	127	101	87	93
Homicide	15	15	5	3	4
Total offences	**6192**	**4721**	**4252**	**3912**	**3948**

As for the traditional types of interventions, we may mention the activities of local authorities (in the first place the assignation of judicial curators supervising the young offenders and cooperating with the judicial authorities); institutional education executed by the so-called diagnostic institutions, young offenders' institutions, educational institutions (ordered usually by the curators); and finally suspended sentences and imprisonment. Non-traditional types of intervention like semi-detention, treatment or attendance centers, community services, fines, compensation orders, moral sanctions or sanctions restricting or taking away rights etc., are being introduced into the system as well. The prevention of delinquency is supported by the Probation and Mediation Service (PMS) introduced by law in 2000, by street-work, peer programs, volunteer programs "5Ps" (analogy to U. S. *Big Brothers, Big Sisters* program) or programs of assistance in re-socialization (REP).

3.6. Criminal liability line – the debate

Another of major issues pertaining to the current Czech youth is the proposed shift in the criminal liability line; more specifically in a new penal code. The discussions of this kind have taken place consistently for the past 30 years. However, the major change appeared in August, 2004 when minors committed two consecutive murders.

According to the Czech legal code (law), the minority status of the youth ends at the age of 15 years. As already stated, at that age a young person gains somewhat restricted legal capacity and attributes of citizenship, such as law entitles the youth to have legal sex etc. The rest of the attributes of full citizenship, including full criminal liability, starts at the age of 18 years. In that modified proposal of the penal code in August 2004, Ministry of Justice changed the criminal liability line to 14 years. According to the Ministry of Justice opinion, this shift was connected to another shift in "sexual liability", ergo shifting an age line dividing a legal conduct of intercourse analogously from 15 to 14 years.

A discussion that followed was vast but unelaborated in comparison to other issues and it was negatively affected by an amalgam of other interconnected issues and politics. The channels of the discussion were mainly the broadsheets news, analyses and commentaries covering both the legal process and expert discussions. The debate focused on such issues such as safety cautions in schools, the state of the family, the purposes and effects of imprisonment etc.

If we limit the scope of the debate to a single issue and that is of lowering the criminal liability line, we can identify the arguments of the two disagreeing sides as following:

The advocacy side:

- lowering the criminal liability line is a general trend in Europe;

- the often sophisticated and brutal character of the offences of minors suggests that the rules to determine the adolescence line should shift downwards.

The opposing side:

- the experts are against;

- it is not a systematic step;

- there is no evidence that lowering the criminal liability line is anyhow connected to lowering criminality.

The overall character of this debate was also affected by a great degree of populism on the advocate side. The opposing side, on the other had, tried to disarm the accusation by rational arguments.

The debate, however, brought into the open the limited nature of knowledge about the current state of the Czech youth, as well as the unsystematic way of solving some of the major problems. The feeble exceptions of occasionally using statistics were the only expert material of quality used as an argument.

B. GOVERNMENTAL POLICY

1. Introduction to the policy process

1.1. Policy process perspective

The prime document, or the guiding force, of the governmental policy in the youth sector is the "Conception of the National Youth Policy till 2007". The *Conception* is not a document that would encompass all the future governmental activities pertaining to the youth, but it is constructed with an ambition to regulate the following five-year period in this sector.

Thus, we will analyze the policy sector from the following four angles: (1) the policy process (i.e., elaboration of the *Conception*); (2) the content of the *Conception*; (3) its socio-historical context; and (4) its main "external" foundation – the *European Commission White Paper*. Policy analysis offers tools that are used to describe the policy processes step by step for which we use the scheme "pluralistic paradigm" (Howlett 1995: 35-40).

Using the selected theory of public policy processes, we will describe relevant policy cycle including the identification of the relevant actors. There are two relevant documents regarding the policy cycle in order that it be complete. It is important to mention that the *Conception* still has not been evaluated, however, we will attempt to proceed with such an evaluation.

1.2. Policy formulation

A formulation of the youth policy, according to the Czech law, belongs under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports. In order to formulate a comprehensive document encompassing the entire youth policy sector, the influence of the methods used in the European Union, while stressing the coordination efforts was the major approach to writing the document. In practice, the direct impulse to start another policy document was a result of the previous *Conception* formulating the goals to 2002. The relative openness of the Ministry of Education in terms of the development of the document enables us to comprehend better the structure of the formulation process. The Ministry of Education published several documents identifying the key actors who were invited to participation on the policy formulation processes.

1.3. Preliminary notes to the summary

In the executive summary, we present only selected policy issues included in the *Conception*, especially those closely related to the youth leisure activities, youth work and social security, youth civic activities, and finally participation in the public life. We avoid, on the other hand, any references regarding the formal system of education, as we noted in the methodical part of the introduction. Likewise, we omit any passages related to all age groups other than the youth.

The *Conception* was adopted by the Government of the Czech Republic in April 2003 by the resolution no. 343 as a formal follow-up to the *Conception of the National Youth Policy in the Czech Republic till 2002* adopted in 1999. It aspires to express the routes in the most important and relevant domains of the youth policy.

The content of the *Conception* is based on several policy papers proposed by involved departments of the Czech state administration, research reports of the IDM MŠMT (Institute

for Children and Youth Research under the Ministry of Education), the Czech Statistical Office, and suggestions presented by the representatives of interested NGOs.

The policy paper working group, formed primarily for policy formulating and selecting of preferred policy options, was established by the Youth Chamber (Komora mládeže), the advisory body to the Minister. The Chamber was designed to encourage and coordinate cross-sector debates and discussions connected to the implementation of youth-related EU legislations or government's approaches towards the youth. The material was consulted with representatives of various children and youth umbrella organizations, such as ČRDM (Czech Children and Youth Council), KSDM (Youth Organizations Union) and RM ČMKOS (Czech Youth Trade Union Council).

The *Conception* was intended to further enhance the priorities and main ideas of the *European Commission White Paper*, adopted in November 2001 (and described below) and to modify them and adapt them to the context of the Czech Republic.

As stated, the evaluation procedure of the policy process is not in place yet. The main argument is that the policy cycle is not in its last phase. Nevertheless, due to the planned "conception cycles", the document preceding the today's *Conception* served as both, as an evaluation document of the preceding cycle and as an input to the agenda setting and policy formulation. The reason may lay in the previous disputes between government members and the most recent Minister of Education. Even though they both were members of the leading political party – the Czech Social-Democratic Party - the political visions, the governing style, and political alignments were so incoherent that a clear discontinuity has been evident in their so-called cooperation, or the lack thereof.

In the *Conception*, the government claims the full responsibility for healthy development of children and youth, and for the creation of corresponding conditions. Similarly, the government expresses its will to help to build an extensive participation of the youth in social, political, and economic life in the Czech Republic; government considerers this as one of its priority.

The government policy related to the youth is primarily carried out by the Ministry of Education, but other departments engage in the implementation of particular issues. Communities, as well as youth sections of regional authorities participate in the executive processes of the youth policy.

2. Executive summary of the *Conception of the National Youth Policy till 2007*

2.1. Policy issues under the competence of the Ministry of Education

According to the *Conception*, the Ministry of Education is expected to elaborate a complex policy paper on the youth participation development and project its conclusions and recommendations into the legal code of the Czech Republic.

With respect to anti-drug policy, the *Conception* emphasizes the importance of implementing the elements of ethical education into the curricular framework, promotion of healthy lifestyle, and development of social skills, as well as active prevention of various types of pathological behavior behaviour within the school.

Two other issues surface as important from the viewpoint of the youth leisure organization. The Ministry of Education is expected to introduce new programs of state subvention to the NGOs working with the youth, i.e., more systemic support of core activities and project-based support of developing innovative fields, such as "participation of young generation in social and political life", "volunteering", "spontaneous and occasional activities for non-organized youth", "environmental activities" etc.

Introduction of this policy should be followed by the implementation and testing of newly designed licensing systems of NGOs. Organizations that already met the previously set requirements will be granted a formal license of medium-to-long-term (i.e., 3-year) subventions of their activities.

2.2. Youth leisure time activities

The explicit and unconcealed cornerstone of the discussion in the *Conception* concerning the youth leisure is a pretentious and practically unsupported assertion that during almost all the nineties, the quality of the youth leisure was declining dramatically. A vague credit is given to the unconfirmed shift of the bulk of the youth from a lifestyle of TV culture to highly computerized lifestyle.

The document continues by an inventory of all public youth leisure institutions, such as youth clubs, public art schools, and youth centers. A new legislation concerning the set up of additional youth centers is envisaged, but not specified.

According to the *Conception*, leisure time is strongly related to the increasing mobility of young people who now need more than in the past multicultural education, greater knowledge of foreign countries and foreign languages, and acquisition of new life experiences.

Youth-related environmental issues are also designed to be carried out by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Environment. They are based mainly on former policy papers regarding environmental education, further education of the pedagogical staff and their, training activities, professional development, etc. The two Ministries finance jointly these projects mainly through public grants and open selection procedure with a budget of approximately 10 million CZK per year each. The role of NGOs in the promotion of environmental issues is considered to be crucial.

The emphasis is put on the environmental education field since the cooperation among the two Ministries and the NGOs working with the youth can thus be documented. The number of the young people registered with such organizations is estimated to be up to 9 % of the youth population. Important role in the youth leisure development is also attributed to about 200 countrywide sport associations embracing almost one quarter of the youth cohort.

2.3. NGOs working with youth – the unbending outside benefactor

National strategies to promote youth development require targeted efforts on the part of both government and non-governmental organizations. NGOs working with young people are considered hardly substitutable and are given credit in almost every domain of the official Czech youth policy (i.e., ranging from the work with different risk groups like unemployed young people to the general role in the cultivation of young people's habits, beliefs, and values). The NGO sector is seen as an equal partner to family, church, and/or school.

The role of NGOs is even more important in the field of youth civic activities. The positive effects of the principle of youth-to-youth non-formal education are explicitly expressed in the *Conception*. Specific projects like "Youth National Parliament" are mentioned and particular local authorities' initiatives are commended. Repeatedly, relatively recent *Voluntary Service Act* is praised. In spite of all this, the level of youth participation is generally considered to be unsatisfactory.

Three main points of the *Conception* regarding the government-NGOs relations could be stated in the following way:
- the government claims credit of spending about 200 million CZK per year in subsidies to NGOs working with youth;
- a steep decrease in membership in youth associations is observed (approximately 20 % in four-year period);
- remaining lack of uniformity (!) of existing umbrella organizations is considered as a weak point of the present system.

2.4. Other specific issues

The *Conception* acknowledges prevalence of rather unsound lifestyle among the Czech youth with the consequences in health conditions and overall well-being. The national program, entitled *Health 21,* enumerates specific measures pointed at elimination of nicotinism and dipsomania in young population. The document presents an overt resolution to reduce substantially the share of young people taking drugs, smoking, and drinking.

The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Interior are charged to continue in legislative protection of the youth against negative influences of the media. The EU instisions call for a creation of an *Anti-Spectator-Violence Policy*.

As far as socio-pathological patterns in youth behavior are concerned, drug addiction is assumed to be one of the most serious problems. The four-year allocated budget to the prevention programs subsidized by the Ministry of Education comes up to 80 million CZK.

General perspective seems to be quite optimistic. The number of offences committed by juveniles has been decreasing since 1996. Nevertheless, substantial steps are to be taken, for example, in the field of post-detention measures and other precautions. Young people leaving young offenders' or orphan institutions are particularly exposed to the danger of homelessness and criminality. Cooperation with NGOs in the re-socialization and reintegration processes is strongly recommended.

Issues concerning labor and social welfare are not missing either. Here, the presence of strong EU wind is manifested. Nevertheless, the text of the *Conception* limits itself to a few empty, catchy phrases.

The Roma minority is mentioned in the connection with EU-financed PHARE projects "Support to Roma Integration" and "Multi-Cultural Education Reform" reputedly supposed to resolve the most pressing domains of both Roma education and multicultural education of the majority population (note: PHARE is a set of EU developmental programs).

3. Notes on the *Conception*

3.1. Sources of criticism

The *Conception* has many features of poorly developed document that is commonly attributed to a stereotyped way of formulating and developing bureaucratic documents in the Czech Republic. What, in particular, then makes the *Conception* unreliable?

A) According to the available documents – (IMD 2001, 2002) and other surveys by few repeatedly cited authors (i.e., Sak 2000) –, only low-quality sociological surveys seemed to serve as "expert" groundings for the development of the *Conception*. These were used without any substantial sociological imagination

followed by poor interpretation of the data. Often, the used surveys themselves do not fulfill the basic requirements, rules, and guidelines for a scientifically valid technique.

B)   The *Conception* has unrealistic aspirations. In the section devoted to the description of some of the basic principles, we find a clear evidence of state-proclaimed supremacy in the responsibility for the youth in comparison to the family or individual (Conception 2002: Chapter 1.1.)

C)   The *Conception* also contains passages with extensive overlaying of content and wording. It almost seems that the document was designed more to fill the space than to be fulfilled, i.e. chapter 1.3, a SWOT analysis resembles many passages in chapter 2.2.

D)   The *Conception* uses inadequate means of solving problems. The idea that an improvement of legal framework would increase the social and political participation of the youth seems to be at least naïve and vague (Conception 2002: p. 13).

E)   In terms of the future, the *Conception* mixes together fulfillment of the future objectives with objectives already accomplished.

As an example illustrating the last objection, the *Conception* presents the introduction of the ombudsman institutions and their function as a big improvement. Notwithstanding the fact that such a presentation of one's own merit would suit more a party agitprop, it has no significance for the development of youth policy, which should actually be the task of the *Conception*. Even more intricate case is the part dealing with the "Youth Center" (DDM). According to the *Conception*, these Centers have become important institutions in many cities. They mainly help with free time of unorganized youth and that trend should be, according to the document, supported in the future. In fact, these Centers as an institutional chain were founded in the late fifties and were already widely frequented. The decline came in the nineties, as the Centers were seen as a part of the communist-conforming apparatus. It is, therefore, at least misleading in this context to suggest that these Centers are becoming important institutions as if it was the most recent trend.

Leaving behind the basic questions of usefulness of the comprehensive conception of youth development, there are still several incitements included in the conception. We may deduce several observations concerning all levels of politics, policy, and, in a very specific institutional way, a polity as well. Let us begin with the polity matters.

3.2. Polity – neocorporativism vs. pluralism

A discussion about efficiency of state and the intermediary system, known from Western Europe and the U.S. since the late seventies to the beginning of the nineties, can be simplified into a clash between neocorporativist and pluralistic paradigms in the context of the Czech Republic. In the beginning of the socio-political transformation (especially between 1990 and 1993), some of the chambers of professionals (e.g., physicians or lawyers) and other sectors' representative bodies including the Chamber of Commerce, had their membership obligatory. That is seen as one of the classical indicators of the degree of neocorporativism (Schubert 1995). Even though in some cases the provision of obligatory membership remains valid, the pluralistic paradigm was the more successful one and a grounding of liberal pluralistic order

was introduced. It could be then deduced that the *Conception*'s turn to neocorporativism is seen not only as convenient, but also essential by the government.

We should note here that in spite of many post-communist specifics, the major ruling party during the nineties was the conservative-liberal ODS (Civic Democratic Party), and the *Conception* was developed during the first term of social-democratic government, but now is being developed jointly with the coalition with social-democratic majority.

What makes us assume that there is a consequential turn towards neocorporativism in the *Conception*? Two major factors to be considered in this respect.

First, there is a clear drift from pluralistic focus on inputs towards outcomes. This is be illustrated by the self-reflection of the role the Ministry of Education should play towards the leisure of youth. The Ministry of Education sees itself as a guarantor of the increasing "quality of youth", a clear deterioration or turn from the pluralistic liberalism of the nineties. The aspirations of the Ministry, as we conclude, are too wide and tumid to be meant seriously.

Secondly, the sole concept of Youth Chamber marks the way towards neocorporative polity, although it is not the best example of neocorporativist practice. The way the body of the Youth Chamber is constructed (see the structure above) and the functions it should assume, i.e., the coordination of all major activities and organizations in the field suggests that the main purpose of this body is not just advisory. It carries a part of the responsibility and is a tool for the Ministry of Education to push indirectly organizations working with youth to get organized under umbrella organizations represented in the Chamber. A state of fragmentation and unbalance, as the text of the *Conception* describes, the pluralistic period of the nineties, should be overcome by putting emphasis on planning and umbrella organizations hierarchy. The primary characteristics of neocorporativism (i.e., an inclination towards outcomes) are exemplarily fulfilled here.

3.3. Policy – towards centralization

A conception of centralized and planned activities designed according to the so-called "expert knowledge" is an explicit example indicating the socialist thought is an integral part of the text. It would not be fair to ascribe the principle of appropriating credit for every positive aspect of the policy domain to social democracy, but promises such as, "the Ministry of Interior should continue safeguarding the legislative protection of children and the juveniles," e.g., keeping the rules, that confirmed their worthiness, is nothing more but balancing between parody and deception.

The above described tendency to push the youth sector to organize itself into hierarchical associations and a focus on the fulfillment of the central plan contrast sharply with the proclamations of the role of local activities. The case of emphasis on centralized government (i.e., demand to monitor the rate of tooth decay in the whole adolescent population) further contrasts with the awareness of the fact that the activity has to be carried out by the local actors and not the central government.

In spite of this, the policy setting is not unambiguous. If we compare the approach of the Ministry of Education towards youth policy and towards other policy sectors, especially towards the system of formal education, we can trace significant differences. We identified a neocorporative trend with respect to the youth policy. That does not necessarily mean this principle would be applicable to other fields. The sharpest contrast may be seen in the tertiary education policy, where the amount of independence of the actors and players, though partly due to the legacy of precedent government, is relatively high even compared to other European countries.

3.4. Politics – distinction from the communist practice

Throughout the *Conception*, narratives of inefficient transition, that caused the decrease in the quality of youth leisure, are widely used. They may well serve not only as a clear division between the "new government", that cares and tries to solve enduring problems, and the rival party, that (according to the current government) caused all the previous state of uncoordinated libertarian disorder. It is clear that the division line is put down in order to take the focus off some of the issues, such as the characteristic traits of the communist regime policy, namely the central control throughout the umbrella organizations and emphasis on planning. The political control performed and maintained by the Socialist Youth Organization (SSM, described in detail below), was based on such a hierarchical order. A tangible reminder of analogies in centralized policy is, for instance, the above described support to revival of practice of the Youth Center.

3.5. "European Commission White Paper – A New Impetus for European Youth"

On 21 November 2001, the European Commission adopted its "*White Paper: A new Impetus for European Youth*" (European Commission 2003). This was followed by the adoption of a resolution of the Council of Ministers. During the consultation processes, prior to the adoption of the *White Paper,* the European Youth Forum had adopted two position papers: „*The Initial Contribution of the European Youth Forum to the White Paper on Youth Policy*" and the „*Strategy and Key Objectives for a Youth Policy in the European Union*". The European Youth Forum is an umbrella organization embracing international youth organizations and national youth councils.

In 2000, the Commission had launched a broad consultation process that led up to the *White Paper*. The consultation process was built upon four pillars: young people, Member States, youth researchers, and civil society. The aims of the *White Paper* are "to enhance Community co-operation for and with young people, by seeing young people as a specific and indispensable element in a resolutely future-oriented policy".

The document points out that European youth population forms a group experiencing profound sociological and identity changes accompanied by prolonged period of dependence on parents, and switching backwards and forwards between work and learning. In addition to that, the Czech youth is considered as exposed to reverberations of political and economic transition, paralleled with international opening of the society, integration processes, and globalization in general. Still, one of the priorities of young people in Europe is to become fully-fledged participants in the process of European construction.

Following the enlargement of the European Union, there will be 75 million young people in Europe between the ages of 15 and 25. The demographic and social changes make the relations between the generations more complex. Negative demographic trends are about to bring quantitative imbalance between the young and old, inducing such negative effects like financial pressure on social welfare systems or labor shortages.

The widening gap between young people and public affairs at national, European, and international levels with the risk of a "citizenship deficit", is considered to be another serious challenge for the European youth. Not closing this gap could cause a widespread reluctance or even refusal of accepting civic responsibility. On that account, effective pedagogical measures targeted at the development of self-activity, solidarity, responsibility and conscientiousness are strongly advocated and favored.

The general attributes of the policy as defined by the *Paper* are openness ("providing information and active communication for young people..."), participation ("ensuring young

people are consulted...”), coherence, and effectiveness. The *Paper* is focused on four key topics:

- participation;
- information;
- voluntary service;
- greater understanding of youth.

Two Czech youth umbrella organizations were consulted during the process: ČRDM and KSDM. Understandably, they played an active role in the redaction of the *Conception*. To sum up, we can state that the main ideas of the policy generally follow the marked up course, but mostly remain vague or self-evident.

3.6. EU monitoring report

Another important European document concerning the Czech youth policy was the “Comprehensive Monitoring Report on the Czech Republic’s Preparations for Membership” from April 2003 (European Commission 2003). It mentioned four youth-related issues. Firstly, it criticized the lukewarmness of the Czech government towards the persisting problems of the Roma minority in the Czech Republic and pleaded an amelioration of this situation. The topic found only a faint echo in the *Conception* and in the government policy in general. Secondly, the report mentioned the community exchange programs (Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates, and Youth). The *Conception* presented the achievements in this direction as an excellent demonstration of the policy. Thirdly, the report certified that youth agenda is primarily the competence of the Member States. Finally, it requested enhanced legal protection of minors in the audio-visual sphere. This claim seems to be the only one to have been incorporated into the Czech policy paper.

C. LEISURE

1. Patterns of spending of the out-of-school time

There has been a great deal of investigation concerning leisure-time patterns of the Czech youth. Numerous research papers came to different and often contradictory results and conclusions. The methodological quality of the surveys is often questionable (as already mentioned). For that reason, we limit our review of the field to a short summary of the factographical aspects of the problem (Macek 2003).

Even though there are important differences in youth leisure-time spending, in general we can observe a few basic constant features. A substantial part of youth leisure time is spent on school-related activities, like home study, timetable gaps or commuting (on average 2 hours per day). After deducting the time needed for school, sleeping and relaxation, hygiene, alimentation etc., we get approximately 6 hours of leisure time divided basically among a) watching TV and listening to music (on average 2 hours); b) conversation with friends, dating or just "hanging around" (2 hours); c) sport (1 hour); d) other (mainly reading books and periodicals, working with computers, helping parents, part-time jobs etc. – 1 hour). The proportions of these activities depend on the individual's family situation, family leisure patterns and habits, domicile etc.

In the Czech Republic, there are three traditional types of after-school leisure-time spending anchored by three particular activities – after-school clubs, family/friends, and specific leisure facilities.

There are about 4,200 after-school youth clubs and centers attended regularly by approximately 250,000 pupils. About the same number of students participate in "traditional" extracurricular activities organized by the elementary art schools (approximately 500 facilities), language schools, and other specific institutions. The most common specializations are as follows (in order of relative importance):
-	music or/and dance (168,000)
-	fine art (45,000)
-	languages (19,000)
-	literary/drama (8,000)

These categories do not include sports and youth associations (this will be discussed later). A vast majority of the facilities are financed mainly by the state or by local authorities. Although, commercial leisure facilities do not present vital alternative yet, the situation seems to be changing rapidly. Only about 4 % of young people claim to participate regularly in civic or political activities. This category ranks at the bottom entry of surveys focusing on about 50 types of leisure activities.

2. Historical background

2.1. Historical context – SSM

The Socialist Youth Union (Socialistický svaz mládeže, SSM) was an organization with history dating from 1969 to 1989. What is its relevance either for today or for the nineties? It becomes more manifest and lucid through the concept of "socialist legacy" (Hanson 2003). This concept explores the modes of instrumentality (i.e., patterns and mechanisms of the influence) of communist past towards post-communist presence. The impacts producing distinctive features of the today's system are as follows:

- the property of SSM (the way it was and is redistributed);
- the subordinate organizations;
- the membership/functionary structure in the historical organization;
- the methods and styles of control of the historical organization;
- politicalization of youth sector;
- a tradition of dissenting organizations;

In order to describe these significant parts of the legacy, we have to follow its history and start with the aims embodied in the structure of the organization at its very beginning.

During the sixties, a significant political relaxation of the communist regime produced a tendency to melt the existing monolithic state in the social sphere towards institutional pluralism. Since 1967, semi-autonomous organizations in the sector of youth were introduced, namely a long ban on the boys- and girls- Scout organizations was lifted. After ČSSR occupation by the armies of Warsaw pact in 1968, a period of the so-called "normalization", i.e., strengthening of the central communist power, was introduced.

SSM was one of the main tools of the consolidation of the communist power. The idea was to gain control over all youth activities through an umbrella organization. This system of "patronage" to all projects done by the youth organizations was a strong element of the communist rule. The number of SSM members was incomparable to any other organizations; according to the official statistics, in 1986 there were 2 223 903 SSM members out of 3 119 110 people in the respective age group including KSČ (Czechoslovak Communist Party. But in fact, SSM served as a "satellite" organization to the KSC communist party. Paradoxically, the impulse to the so-called Velvet Revolution (1989) was given by the demonstration held under the patronage of SSM. Immediately before that upheaval, the youth had been considered by the communist government to be the riskiest element of the society, and rightfully so, the youth indeed played prominent role in the events to come.

After several attempts to regain influence during the revolution, SSM was renamed, most of the members left while fast and countless changes in structure were on the way. A part of the semi-autonomous organizations, like Pionýr or ecologically-oriented Brontosaurus, has disappeared as well. What has become the most problematic is the ownership issues of the former SSM properties (estimated budget 30 billions per year in 1989).

2.2. Structure and functions of SSM

The organization's main function was to prepare and recruit the future communists; it was an express preparatory stage for the communist party membership and its elite recruitment. On the other hand, as in other post-totalitarian regimes, the membership in the communist party was restricted and limited only for the most devoted and chosen ones.

The SSM membership for many young people was either just a required life episode (i.e., conformization) or political stage for the rest. For many young people, however, the membership meant an easier admission to an institution of higher education institution for which this membership was a prerequisite. During the late eighties, as the rigid control of the communist government eroded and loosened, the membership became even more formal (most people just paid the dues).

A completely different situation was at the "higher" levels of SSM. The degree of conformity did not differ significantly from that of the communist party membership and thus young people had to demonstrate the real commitment. Just before the Velvet Revolution, the intended politicization of the organization, especially on the top levels, had been nearly completed. Even in today's Czech politics, having a personal history with formal rankings in

SSM is considered to be disgrace, may be scandalized and is a disqualifying feature for some ambitious politicians.

Pionýr, SSM child- and youth-club organization, was in a relatively ambiguous position to SSM. In a formal way, it was a subordinate part of SSM, with certain autonomy, but in reality, the membership meant a preparatory stage to SSM membership, though not a strict precondition (just like for the SSM membership for the communist party membership). Basically, there were four levels of political socialization:

      1)   Jiskra ("Sparkle", a preliminary level to Pionýr)
      2)   Pionýr (a preliminary level to SSM)
      3)   SSM (a preliminary level to KSC)
      4)   KSČ

On each of these four levels, a member had to pledge loyalty to the regime.

2.3. Youth resistance

The tradition of boy- and girl-scouts (1918-1948) did not disappear completely during the communist era. A few resisting organizations existed outside the official structures, i.e., illegally. Also other forms of traditional youth leisure organizations (e.g., woodcraft troops) persisted in an illegal sphere. Another way of persistence for the so-called "non-approved" youth organizations was to "hide" its identity under some of the existing organizations that were always less political, and thus under a weaker control, mainly Sokol (traditional physical training association) and other later founded organizations, such as TOM (Youth Tourist Club).

Not all the organizations under SSM were directly operated by the centralized political power. An extreme pressure on the illegal organizations and on the "veiled" ones produced specific modes of operation, behavior, secretive characters, and negative stances towards any kind of control. These distinctive features have resulted in the problems with identity in the post-communist era.

3. NGOs working with youth

3.1. Development of the youth NGOs in the Czech Republic

As stated above, SSM (Socialist Youth Organization) used to be the predominant youth organization in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, a veritable moloch with monopolistic tendencies enjoying full support from the state machinery. After the Velvet Revolution, a rapid decentralization process seemed to be the only logical way towards a meaningful organization in the society.

After the Velvet Revolution, a new SSM structure, comprising of formally illegal groups, freshly freed "veiled" actors, transformed this organization into an entirely new subject. The early nineties were witnessing a great number of newly created youth associations of different sizes and orientations with a varying time-span of existence. Later on, during the nineties, many of these associations learned the advantages of cooperation and partnerships with the other associations or organizations and some of them gained numerical superiority. As we will see, at that time the re-centralization process was strongly favored by the state authority.

During the first phase of the development (approximately 1990–1992), the players themselves consolidated on the local as well as associational level. The establishment of the umbrella structures was the second step towards the institutionalization of these organizations. What were the positions of the organizations? How were their positions affected by their

origins and history? Even though such changes have not been at the center of media attention, they may well serve to grasp the dilemmas of the Czech transformation.

3.2. Where are the youth leisure organizations heading to?

Let us illustrate the first period of the development by presenting two major youth associations amounting together about one third of the organized youth. Both of them were successors of the most important youth organizations with national traditions, and as such, represent the core of the Czech youth movement. "Junák – svaz skautů a skautek ČR" (The Scouts Organization of the Czech Republic) re-opened its activity in 1990 with more than 50,000 individual members. "Pionýr" developed from PO SSM (Pioneer Organization of the Socialist Youth Organization) with about more than 20,000 individual members.

In fact, in 1990, many of the clubs organized in PO SSM decided to become scout, tourist or other clubs and transferred the clubs' property like clubrooms, sport and camping equipment or cash to their new associations. The transfer was done on the basis of a quadrilateral agreement about property settlement between Pionýr and Youth Union (SSM successor organization) on one side, and ČTU (Czech Campers Association) and Junák, on the other one. Nevertheless, the attitudes of the public towards the opposite side remained reserved, if not irritated, on both sides. The property priced at 33 million CZK and was transferred in the first period, mainly to the state (schools, local authorities, DDM), Junák and other youth and sports associations (ČTU, Kondor, Sokol, TJ etc.).

Concerning the controversial identity of Pionýr, two points seem to be important. In one of its first statements after the political change, Pionýr certified to be the legal successor to PO SSM – former constituent of SSM. Elsewhere, Pionýr claimed the will to remain strongly value-oriented and not having the leisure organization as the only goal.

The transformation period of that organization was quite chaotic. The internal and external property and ideology disputes were accompanied by a poor quality of communication between all levels. The activities of Pionýr were often complicated by deprecatory attitudes of elementary school authorities owning the needed clubrooms. The psychological pressure on Pionýr from the outside was very strong – many people were convinced that Pionýr either should not or did not exist any more.

The age and orientation structure of Pionýr might well illustrate the overall structure of the sector. In 1993, about 13,000 members (out of 50,000) were older than 15 years, but the average age of the Pionýr members was rising because of the lack of new members. Two thirds of the clubs were tourist-oriented or without any specific orientation, the rest of them were involved in sports, culture or environmental activities.

The Scout organizations, on the other hand, had better prospects. The social climate was more favorable to the youth organizations that were not discredited by forty years of abetment and pressure. This fact could be illustrated by the following: Government subsidies 1990–1992: Pionýr 2, 17, 18 million, Junák 3, 33, 19 million.

In spite of all this, Pionýr and Scout organizations cooperate in some measure in various fields of their activities under the flag of their umbrella organization.

3.3. Umbrella organizations

At the end of nineties, for various reasons, but mainly due to the struggle for government subsidies, Czech youth associations began to form the so-called umbrella organizations. The Ministry of Education defines the youth umbrella organizations by three major criteria:

- at least two thirds of their individual members must be under 26 years of age;
- they must embrace 5 or more youth associations;
- they must not be a part of any other umbrella organization.

The predominant umbrella organization is ČRDM (Czech Council of Child and Youth). It officially claims to be the only representative platform of the youth associations in the Czech Republic. ČRDM was established in 1998 with the following founding members: Junák, Pionýr, ATOM (Youth Tourist Clubs Association), YMCA, Folkloric Association, ČTU, and Christian Youth Associations Union. Today it embraces almost 90 associations of different sizes uniting together about 200,000 individual members.

The proclaimed priorities of ČRDM are to build the prestigious after-school education in the society and to contribute to the development of necessary conditions for volunteers working with children and youth. ČRDM provides coordination services to its associated members, organizes seminars and workshops, represents the members at the Government (*Work with Youth Act* preparatory group, Government Council for NGOs, Youth Chamber) and at the international level (i.e., ČRDM is the official representative of the Czech Republic at the European Youth Forum, umbrella organization embracing international youth organizations and national youth councils; *European Commission White Paper* consultation, described above).

Another very important service for its members is the administration of the accident insurance. In addition, ČRDM organizes the biggest annual festival of the NGOs working with young people called "Bambiriade". In 2004, Bambiriade events were held in 19 cities around the Czech Republic and reckoned more than 220,000 visitors.

The main themes of interest of the whole sector are deduced from the themes treated in ČRDM's monthly bulletin *Archa* and from the organization's Internet pages:
- youth parliaments;
- organized and non-organized youth;
- Czech youth in European Union;
- volunteering;
- primary prevention and youth NGOs;
- tourist and woodcraft clubs tradition, etc.

Until 2003, there were two other umbrella organizations: KSDM (Circle of Youth Associations) and SDMO (Youth Organizations Coalition). KSDM embraced few dozens of very heterogeneous youth associations, DUHA being the most important one. Politically oriented youths groups like Young Social Democrats were also represented. SDMO was formed mainly by the Woodcrafter League, YWCA and Children's Homes Association.

3.4. The Ministry of Education's politics of subsidy

During the formative period of the nineties, a rather continuous system of government subsidies developed:
- to support the umbrella organizations (explained by the need of continuous and efficient youth-work understructure);
- to support information and knowledge building;
- to support youth participation;
- to support international cooperation;
- to support development and volunteering.

The priorities of the "National Subvention Program for NGOs Working with Youth in 2004–2006" are based on the declarations of the *Conception*. About 200 million CZK is granted every year to the NGOs, mainly for operational expenditures (see table below). NGOs

focusing on sports, environmental education, and Roma community integration have separate budgets (thousands CZK).

Subsidies	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Operational expenditures	123,074	143,784	162,701	173,660	168,830
Investment expenditures	17,264	14,998	10,935	12,220	10,500
Total	140,338	158,782	173,636	185,880	179,330

It is important to note that the group of grantees is very heterogeneous, eight most important beneficiaries (those granted more than 5 million CZK a year) receive more than 80 % of the sum. At the same time, these organizations rank among the largest ones compared to the basis of members under age of 26. The main purpose of the grants is to pay for salaries and international activities (2003).

Organization	Members up to 26 yrs	Subvention
ATOM	9,184	9,201
ČRDM	158,921	9,629
ČTU	7,086	6,410
Duha	4,261	5,136
Folkloric Association	11,846	6,500
Junák (Scout)	41,845	32,808
Pionýr	17,117	18,437
Czech Volunteer Fire Brigades	82,586	16,500

3.5. The Woodcrafter League debate – an illustrative problem

Let us illustrate the most problematic discussions taking place inside the NGOs during the formative period by using the Woodcrafter League debate. The Woodcrafter League went through the "standard" institutional evolution similar to the Czech Scout organizations: first banned in 1948; then scattered minority continued in their secret operations during the fifties and sixties; reestablished in 1968; banned anew in 1969; illegal operation during the era of "normalization"; and finally reestablished in 1990.

In 1995, two numerically unequal groups inside the League clashed in a debate on the future heading of the organization. The respective positions may be described as "powerful centralization" vs. "loosely operating confederacy". Three leaders of one of the troops, by far the biggest ones, opened this debate by sending an open letter to the leadership comprising of the differing views pertaining the new direction of the League.

During 1994, the leadership began to work on a new ambitious plan to gain publicity. The promotion included a substantial increase of employees in the headquarters, transformation of internal newsletters and increase in their circulation. There were two basic aims behind this: (1) promotion of the ideas of woodcraft; and (2) better access to public funds, both by the means of increases of membership and greater publicity (i.e., visibility). The debate was held by a limited number of leadership elite, but it became clear that it was a clash between two concepts of the future role of the League.

Critics views: a non-formal, non-bureaucratic association of independent organizations whose main purpose is to provide a contact with the public authorities. Under this view there is only paid employee and that is the accountant. Most of the component troops do not need any grants or subsidies. The ones, that need it, may apply individually. The

emphasis was put on the relation to nature, decentralization efforts, and no major unifying ideology or even semi-religious philosophies.

Defenders view: a coordinated operational body that would be able to compete with other youth leisure organizations. The unified inner and outer policy, ensured by the headquarters and its apparatus, would supply the strength of the demands towards the Government. A tribute should be paid to woodcrafter movement founder's (i.e., E. T. Seton's) legacy and to the rituals of the North American natives should be preserved.

This debate lasted just about a year, a majority of the undecided turned to the defenders of the current policy and the result was the continuation and slightly intensified promotion. The League hired several outside specialists to the central office, including a full-time manager to help them to resolve this problem. From today's point of view, the later development showed that the effort to enlarge and highlight the importance of the organization was unrealistic, due to the overall decline in the interest in youth leisure organizations.

There are at least two specific factors that were affecting the debate. On one side of the critics of new centralized policy, there were the former formally "veiled" actors, on the other side of the defenders, there was a coalition of an illegal core and newly formed groups. The critics saw woodcraft as a style of non-formal learning, whereas the goal of the defenders was woodcraft as a world view. It would be misleading to see these two factors as the comprehensive determinants, however, such a value- or institutionally-oriented points of view might be a useful tool for research of inner dynamics of transformation of other leisure organizations in the Czech Republic.

3.6. Sport

The competencies of the Ministry of Education concerning leisure time are divided into two different departments; (1) youth; and (2) sports.

The Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of sport activities, and thus considers 8 to 10 hours of physical education per week to be the optimal. With 2–3 hours of physical training required by the national curricular, the Ministry of Education expects the after-school sport activities to take up approximately 6 hours a week. So the governmental reliance on the NGOs sports associations is quite understandable. Moreover, the Czech sports associations have a notable tradition in such organizations as Sokol, Orel etc.

Sports associations unite more than 2 million people and provide both material and financial maintenance of objects and facilities valued at 53 billion CZK (MŠMT 2005). The national budget supports only about 0,3 % of the value per year, with the minimal maintenance expenditures estimated at 2 %. Only 75 % of elementary and secondary schools are equipped with proper gymnasiums or sport fields. Still, in smaller communities, sport associations are the only functioning form of civic joint actions.

If we use the same criterion as heretofore, i.e., government subsidies of more than 5 million CZK, we can distinguish five major sports associations working with young people (Czech Motorist Club being the excluded one). Two predominant associations receive more than 10 % of the national budget grant assigned to the civic associations of physical education and sports: ČSTV (Czech Physical Education Union) – 178 million (65 %); and ČOS (Sokol) – 29 million (12 %). Three more associations receive more than 5 million CZK: AŠSK (Association of School Sport Clubs) – 18 million, SSS ČR (Czech Republic Sports Union) – 11 million, and ČASPV (Czech Association "Sport for Everyone") – 6 million CZK of subsidies for non-investment purposes in 2004.

3.7. Information channels

In accord with the *Conception* priorities of the youth policy, the Ministry of Education supports the formation of a network of youth information centers (ICM). Today's society presents high demands on the edification of young people and on their capability to look for information and use it functionally. The abundance of sources causes a serious problem for the Czech society that, in the past, was not taught how to work with the overload of information. To deal with this problem, the government founded Youth Information System (ICM) that supplies information to the entire range of youth-related topics.

One of the agents standing behind the ICM is the ministerial Institute for Child and Youth (IDM). It also supported the establishment of ČRDM-operated National Youth Information Center (NICEM) created primarily in order to meet the organization's declared objectives and promote its activities via media. Similarly, IDM cooperates with ČRDM in editing the Youth Automatized Database (Adam.cz). On its own, IDM opened the first Unemployed-Youth Information Center, as early as in 1992, and now it operates as a direct youth information center in the downtown of Prague.

The local information centers are associated in AICM (Association for Support of Youth Information Centers), an intermediating organization funded directly by the Ministry of Education. The information centers are opened at least 5 days a week in accordance with the demand. Most centers record 10 to 30 clients a day with the exception of the Prague center that registers daily more than 50 visitors. The bulk of the visitors form high-school and university students, apprentices, and young people under 26 years of age.

The centers are arranged in order to allow free entrance without the need of ringing, entry registration or presenting ID documents. The centers have usually one or two full-time employees and 3 to 4 volunteers. About 50 % of the staff are people under 26 years. On average, the centers are equipped with six computers.

The predominant categories of information requested are as follows (in order of importance):
- education;
- employment;
- leisure and traveling;
- other.

The centers cooperate most often with their umbrella organization AICM, ČNA, ICN and YMCA ČR. Most centers have also established partnerships with local and regional authorities, NGOs, public press, and similar cross-border organizations.

For the future development, a problem of cleavage between Christian alignment and other organizations providing volunteering activities, may appear in more visible and intensified way than today. The overall public mistrust of the activities of the Christian church interrupted by a short interim period after the turnover in 1989 had one exception, the social and humanitarian services. The evangelizational part of these activities was minimized due to the surmising public eye, but it may be still traced, and is presumed to grow. As for example, Agnes, "agency of the NGO sector" with one of the major sites devoted to volunteering, quotes the volunteer-based organizations, omits some major non-Christian ones.

D. CIVIC ACTIVITIES

1. Basic introduction

1.1. Roots of the political profile of youth

Recent research (Vaněk 2002, Blažek 2003) allows us to see that the political activities of the communist times, especially during the eighties, in their entirety. We can thus see both the roots of today's political expressions and the transformation of the political participation patterns. Firstly, the most important cleavage, that constituted to a large degree the political arena, was the conformity to the regime. The acts of conformity were predominantly not part of the political sphere (assuring a favorable position within the system), but the definitional line were the acts of non-conformity. This can help to understand the seemingly absurd situation of the eighties, when to wear a long hair was due to the political consequences an ultimate anti-political and to be a member of the communist party was "just" a matter of opportunism.

Among the ways of anti-political participation during the eighties, the fundamental ones were the following:
- rock/punk/reggae-music fans and band community;
- the movement of pacifist/hippies (Nezávislé mírové hnutí);
- the Scout/tramp/woodcraft non-legal organizations;
- the environmental movement; and
- the Christian movement.

All of these movements played crucial role during the transformation of the dissenting movement from the small core center to a mass movement. Probably the most influential mass movement operating through the late eighties was a conglomerate of the above named groups directed to specific environmental issues. The heterogeneous nature of the movement became apparent shortly after the turnover in 1989. Most of the then existing political activities went through a short period of depoliticalization and their political function became inconsiderable. They also diversified themselves in an incredible way because the need to bind themselves in a conspiracy of illegality have disappeared.

The Independent Pacifist Movement became a notable source of diverse political figures ranging from monarchists, through mainstream liberals, to anarchists. A short period of radicalization was caused by a combination of the unknown experience of political freedom and viewing political compromise as a betrayal to democracy – a legacy of the dissenting movement. A considerable segment of the youth became a part of such subcultures as punks, anarchists, squatters or skinheads.

Now we would draw our attention to the prevailing forms of political socialization and participation in the youth organizations. An overall view of the youth political alignment is followed by a section devoted to the peculiarities of representation of political socialization. The classifying criteria are the form and objects of the political activity. Firstly, we will cover the directly politically aligned activities of youth- the youth political parties. Secondly, we will have a short look at selected issues of centered activities. The last part will deal with the activities aimed at overall political participation and socialization.

1.2. Political alignments and attitudes

As could be assumed from the section on historical roots of the youth political participate the political alignments and the corresponding modes and intensity of political participation

underwent enormous changes during the nineties. A look back at the period around the Velvet revolution, when the youth was the most operational and powerful force in the society, extreme contrasts with the disalignment of today's forms of civic participation surfaces.

The overall inclination to dissatisfaction with the political situation – according to Čapek, only 7 % of the Czech youth were satisfied with current political situation in 2001 (Čapek 2001: 30) – may seem to be the part of the new Czech folklore, but there are other indications of a serious problem in the political socialization. The commitment to the political life at all levels in youth organizations is extremely low. All conceivable indicators including the election turnout in the respective cohort, the political party membership etc., are showing that the interest in political and public issues is very low among the youth. The modes of political or civic actions are limited and indirect, the prevailing behavior is petition organizing and signing.

The prevalent concept of the changes of political attitudes is the shift to the political right as a result of the forcible political indoctrination by Marxism-Leninism during the communist times. A more detailed look uncovers the immaturity of the Czech public in the political and ideological affairs, so any tendency, until at least the mid-nineties, may be seen as coincidental cause of this immaturity. The extremism as an attitude seems to be the more and more marginal, but the very issue of extremism became a source of substantial ideological disputes at the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Interior created the first draft of the list containing the extremist movements among which were included various neo-Nazi groups and hooligans, as well as (quite paradoxically) some of the major environmental organizations. As expected, the environmentalists began a successful campaign to be divested of the label.

1.3. Issue-centered interest groups

As noted above, a large heterogeneous coalition of opposing and dissenting movements aimed at dealing primarily with specific environmental issues, reached its peak during the late eighties. Due to the diversification efforts and non-existence of the enemy (the communist nomenclature was "fought down"), this practice virtually disappeared.

Various attempts to revive operational coalitions for some political purposes went broke. The quintessential and most massive one (included a mass demonstration of some 200,000 people) was a call to purify Czech politics ("Děkujeme, odejděte", "Thank You, Leave). Practically, a significant part of the student leaders of the Velvet Revolution articulated a public dissatisfaction with the politicians and wrote a petition calling for a demise of the major politicians of the main political parties. Even though the movement had large temporary mobilizing power in the Czech Republic, the political system was strong enough to resist such an endeavor.

In 2001, an occasion that cemented and accelerated the forming of the anti-globalist coalition was the simultaneous meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Prague. The actions of an alliance of various international anti-globalist groups with relatively very small number of Czech members or direct sympathizers, Czech Communist Party, Communist Youth Union, various Trockists and anarchists, were the first encounter of the Czech public with both violent mass demonstrations and police brutality unseen since the communist times. These events resulted in the public pressure on the greater accountability of police that resulted in the forms of watchdog organizations. In addition, a public image of the extremists was created.

The latest example of a coalition with a substantial participation of the youth that awaken a wide attention of the public was formed around the plan to move a railway station in Brno.

Brno is a regional center in Morava. Its main railway station constitutes a crossing point to many other European cities. The proposed shift from the current location (next to the center) was rather symbolic and became political issue due to the symbolic meaning of the act. On the side of the supporters of the shift, the symbolic act of a great release to the expansion of the center would be made. The defenders were pointing out the dispensability of the measure according to the imbalance of the costs and revenues were making the center less accessible. The supporters came mainly from the city council, the coalition of the disapproval was constituted by a conglomerate of political parties (Greens, Liberal European Democrats), environmental organizations, human rights watchdog organizations, and even academic fellows. The referendum, followed by an unheard-of vehemence of campaigning on both sides, finally ended with the number of participants not reaching the legal quorum. Nevertheless, it was a clear demonstration of the potential towards more active and issue-centered campaigns on the local level.

1.4. Non-specific political organizations

There are two main reasons for the demand of politically no-specific civic activities. The performance of schools in this field is still very poor, the transformation from indoctrination to civic education has not been successful. And, the above described distrust in politics, caused a scrupulous attitude towards politics. These two factors created an environment of where the activities of civic education focused on the development of formal skills, namely debating and forming consensus. The prevalent organizational methods for training such activities are the Debate League, the Youth Parliaments, and recently designed a competition called "On the way to the parliament". (Note: Youth Parliaments are the most stable ones of them).

A chain of organizations, formed by local DDM, school, municipality or NGO, has several forms of aims and activities. Each organization is defined by a common methodology, set up for each year by the headquarters of the respective division of Duha, the organization holding the project. The essential task for the individual local organizers is to define the electorate, to hold elections, and to secure some communication means for the body, principally a regular access to municipality. Main aims of the project are the improvement of legal consciousness, understanding decision-making processes, and the improvement of the discussion and consensus-making skills. It is aimed at children and youth between 12 and 20 years of age. For the year 2005, it is assumed that 60 local bodies would be working in the Czech Republic. The content of the work ranges from an active style of cooperation with the municipality to learning how to follow the rules of the game.

2. Youth organizations of political parties

2.1. Introduction

A research of youth organizations among political parties has standard analytical tools and concepts (Šimíček 1999). It became a fashion to emphasize the limited nature of the application of Western political science concepts for the context of the post-communist political phenomenon. Problems are mainly arising in defining the objects of research. In the Czech Republic, a mix of practical, accidental, and theoretical reasons caused some degree of formal independence of youth political organizations.

Now we will proceed according to the classical political functions of youth organizations as a political party. Then we will describe the four major ones according to their self-presentation. Finally, we will describe the reasons of the anomalies.

Political functions:
- representing the political party among the "outward" youth;
- representing the interests of youth inward (inside the party);
- political education and socialization of junior politicians.

We have to add that we will leave behind a large component of other socializing functions.

2.2. Young Social Democrats

Young Social Democrats (Mladí sociální demokraté, MSD) have been continually operating since 1990. Thus, it is the oldest youth organization among the youth organizations of political parties. It also is, from many points of view, the most successful organization, since the majority of younger social-democrat MP's and all the ministers under 40 years, including the current prime minister, began their careers in the MSD.

Value principles: solidarity, participation, participative democracy based on European values and justice.

Membership: about 500. Although the membership in the party is not a precondition to the MSD membership and MSD membership is not a precondition to the party membership, concurrency of both is massively prevailing among the cohort.

Character of binding to the political party (ČSSD, Czech Social Democratic Party): material support (free office rental); manifested cooperation with the party justified by the program proximity; MSD mentioned in the party constitution: a provision securing at least 10 % of seats at regional and central executive committees seats to the MSD members; the chairman of MSD has an advising competency at the central executive committee of the party.

Modes of action: seminars, conferences, lectures, organization of meetings with politicians, sport, and other leisure activities.

Feature current activity: staging "National conference on subsidies and legal acts for the utilization of renewable sources of energy".

2.3. Communist Youth Union (KSM)

KSM is the only youth organization that unashamedly and proudly refers to itself as the SSM heir. Even though the membership is small, there exists a very active core. In the past, KSM has been alleged of the series of trainings combining semi-armed and ideological elements. Its overall character placed KSM on the Ministry of Interior's list of the extremist organizations that should be closely monitored.

Value principles: Marxism-Leninism, elimination of capitalism, reinstallation of the communist order.

Membership: about 200.

Character of binding to the political party (KSČM, Communist Party of Czechia and Moravia): material "aid" from the party in return "for the support of efforts of the party towards change of regime".

Modes of action: direct campaigning, rallying, lectures, organization of larger political movements (against IMF congress).

Feature current activity: campaigning for a positive presentation of 1948 events (communist coup d'état).

2.4. Junior Club of the Christian-Democratic Party

A Christian youth political club was the first youth club founded legally after the Velvet Revolution. Christian Democratic Party is a party with the longest continual tradition. However, this domain became so fragmented and confusing during the nineties that the today's Junior Club had to be re-established in 1998.

Value principles: defending conservative and Christian values.

Membership: about 200.

Character of binding to the political party (KDU-ČSL, Christian Democratic Party): an exclusive mutual agreement specifying the content of the cooperation.

Modes of action: lectures, seminars, conferences, organization of meetings with Christian politicians.

Feature current activity: German language courses, contrived in cooperation with the European Council.

2.5. Young Conservatives

Young conservatives are the largest youth political party organization. During the turbulent procedures of the Czech right wing, the organization ostensibly kept wider political

alignments. The intrinsic reason for keeping multiple alignments could be seen in the failure of attempts to formalize the ties with ODS, by a margin the largest right-wing party. Be it forced or self-imposed, the organization thus gained chance not to be bound to adopt restraints following tighter alignment.

Value principles: liberal-conservative, pluralistic democracy.

Membership: about 700.

Character of binding to political parties: manifested alignment towards the forces of the unconsolidated right-wing parties, actually two unsuccessful attempts to formalize relationship to ODS (Civic Democratic Party), justifying this contradiction by the status of ODS as the "only relevant right-wing party".

Modes of action: seminars, conferences, leisure activities, organization of meetings with politicians.

Feature current activity: Educational excursions to the municipal police department in Zlín and subsequent discussions.

2.6. Relation to the mother parties

The relationship between the mother party and her youth organization is often an intricate one. Even though the Junior Club has the name of the party of its affiliation embodied in its own name, the connection is weaker than are the affiliations of the young social democrats and communists to their mother parties. What makes the youth organization dissimulate its identity as a subsidiary part of the respective political party? And on the other hand, what makes the parties foster the youth organizations, if they like to at least play-act independency?

There is antagonism coming out of the above described ill-famed relationship between the KSČ and SSM. Also, party-membership principle is obscured by The Party, meaning the monopolistic post-totalitarian KSČ. On the other hand, the membership of parties, apart from ODS, is aging fast (Linek 2004), so leaderships' endeavors to activate a youth club may be seen as safety precautions.

The main raison d'être of the youth political parties may have varied through times, however, the political socialization including the essential networking is an enduring feature. Because of the major political party membership has declined and aged, we expect the youth political parties to be a base for the future recruitment.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Policy alternatives

1.1. Layers of alternatives

A general overview of the youth policy sector suggests that there are several levels of alternative steps to be taken. On the most profound level of polity, i.e. the institutional and organizational design of the sector, there is a dilemma on the level of pluralism vs. corporativism. More specific issue is the shape of the policy and the way how it should be developed, proposed and implemented. Notes on the development and formulating of the policy are described in section B. The legal framework determining status of working with youth seems to be another key issue among the leisure sector, thereby the section "Work with Youth Act" is devoted to both the major principles and the actual embodiment of them. The most distracting feature of the today's policy is its seclusiveness, hereby the section on communication strategy suggests some changes as to how to make it more effective. The last section on youth political participation suggests no additional direct influences of the state.

1.2 Pluralism vs. corporativism

Though the issue of the institutional framework is seen by the political parties as well as by the experts as a political one, some positive remarks can be made. First, it is clear that the shift on any side needs to be done in concordance with the rest of the governmental policy. Second, a prevailing institutional design should be applied to all youth sectors since it is more than desirable to have the character of political system homogeneous in this respect. This makes the case against the neocorporativism. There is no general shift towards corporativism that can be detected and the prevailing character of the institutional design might be described as pluralistic.

There is another serious objection concerning the introduction of the neocorporativist practice in the youth sector. The old-boys networks, which were established during the communist times and emerged through the main criteria of political loyalty, are not based on competency. Such networks indeed would be more favored and stronger in more corporativist environment.

1.2 "Work with Youth Act"

Several drafts of a "Work with Youth Act" were already presented in the Parliament during the nineties, but no law specifying, at least some basic principles of the work with youth, has been ever enacted. However, there is almost no argument against the opinion that such an act is highly desirable. Not only would a law of this sort serve as a transparent and reliable landmark for all the actors of the sector, and thus their policy measures could be more long-run and consistent. In addition, it could be a useful instrument for communicating the basic principles of the national youth policy to the external agents, such as judicial authorities, employers, etc. Not to mention the fact that such a law seems to be a must for a country integrating itself into the structures of the European Union.

The law should aspire to set transparent conditions of the formulation of governmental policy as soon as it is possible. It should provide a reliable framework for the subsidy policies.

More responsibility in this respect should be delegated towards the regional authorities. Nonetheless, explicit limits for the accountability should be defined.

The state should openly and explicitly accept its responsibility for the use of the financial sources assigned to the organizations working with the youth. Providing a detailed list of the supported activities openly to the wide public would be a possible step in this direction. Such an acknowledgement could serve as a preventive measure against possible abuses and dishonesty in "easy-profit" intentions.

The law should also enable and encourage more effective campaigning in the field of public education and general cultivation of the youth sector. A better implementation of the already intended licensing system could be one of the ways how to enhance the quality of the work with youth, mainly in the field of regular programs and activities (i.e., summer camps). It is to be stressed that our recommendations reflect the present situation as it is lived through by the different actors and not by the abstract, or even made-up view, on the field presented by many official documents.

1.3 Conception of the youth policy

Apart from the "Work with Youth Act", a serious conception of the governmental youth policy is necessary. In order to be meaningful, such a document has to be based on expert research and on local knowledge of the situation. Unfortunately, the existing documents lack expertise in both respects. The conception is to resume relevant information in a manner accessible to all the actors without being short on professionalism, judgment, and purpose.

On the lower level of governance, regional authorities should be encouraged to introduce into their practice prospective planning concerning the youth field. Such a step could contribute to a more realistic and more tangible design of the content of the subsequent conceptions. At present, the regional authorities use different instruments of prospective planning in other areas of their policies.

1.4 Communication strategy

It is evident that the national strategy to promote any development in the youth sector requires concerted efforts on the part of both government and non-governmental organizations. It seems to us that in many cases the NGOs and even the local authorities, public schools and other state-connected actors and institutions are not able to identify the relevant counterpart for their actions in the governmental sphere. This might be illustrated by the mediocre and episodic role our government has played in the events linked with the "International Year of Volunteering in the Czech Republic".

There is a strong need for the formulation and implementation of a new, efficient communication strategy. Such a strategy is to be both high-powered and consistent in the long-run.

There are two major processes affected by the existing repellency of the communication of Ministry of Education and its subordinate bodies, the policy reach and the information dissemination, both affected by the "unselling" character of the information flow of any kind, e.g., any of the official prints. Clear and striking shift in the overall communication strategy is a precondition to any policy change.

1.5 Participation of the youth in civic and political activities

There are some serious alternatives for the policy in the civic activities and politics sector. Due to the legacies of the communist past, it is unambiguous that the organizations providing the civil activities are susceptible to be seen as branches of political parties or at least ideologies. Therefore, it is highly desirable for them to be as separated from the state structures as possible. Due to many factors, including the time period, no imbalance could be derived any more from the former Socialist Youth property, which used to be subject of non-transparent fund allocation. On the other hand, the financing by the means of issue-centered grants seems to be both a purposive and controllable opportunity. Even though this sub-sector conceals many hidden dangers of corruption or indoctrination, etc., it is essential in providing inputs to the political system, particularly political socialization.

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